

Pursuing newfound passion for growing vegetables and flowers

*Crop diversity,
a key component*



When she was growing up in Summerside, Stephanie Dewar admits she never envisioned operating a mixed vegetable and flower farm.

While her grandfather did have a dairy farm, she enjoyed visiting during her childhood, her passion for growing things developed during a volunteer stint in South America and the Caribbean and after graduating with a marketing degree. When she returned to Canada, she studied Food Security and Urban Agriculture and, in 2013, did an apprenticeship at Heart Beet Organics, a diversified organic operation in North Wiltshire.

"I learned so much there," Stephanie said, adding she too has made crop diversity a key component of her operation.

After working at the Legacy Garden in Charlottetown and a season farming in Prince Edward County in Ontario, Stephanie eventually purchased the property in Cornwall and established Morning Dew Gardens. She explains "it wasn't a working farm when we bought it and it needed a fair bit of work."

Her business offers weekly orders of veggies, salad greens, herbs and flowers from a one-acre market garden and also offers Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) shares to about 40 families throughout the summer months. Stephanie also sells through the online portal of the Charlottetown Farmers' Market.

"Freshness is key and the CSA baskets vary throughout the season depending on what is ready to harvest," she said.

They have a u-pick flower garden with the option to bulk order flowers. Stephanie said the u-pick has proven popular and "quite often it is families picking together, which is really nice to see."

This summer was the third year of operation for Morning Dew Gardens. One of her first moves after purchasing her farm was to register for the Future Farmers program. With funding from the federal and provincial governments under the Canadian Agricultural Partnership, the program is designed to assist people entering the industry to establish or expand their operations.

So far, the program has helped Stephanie with the cost of water and soil testing, as well as setting up an irrigation system, which she says has been a lifesaver in dry seasons.

The program has also helped with the cost of a storage shed nearer to the crops in the fields, as well as a station to weigh and wash vegetables. The latest addition has been a mobile stand that can be used either as a roadside stand or set up at the Farmers' Market.

Stephanie said her goal is to become more efficient rather than expand significantly in size. She and her partner, Andrew Raymer, are able to run the operation themselves with some help from her parents Keith and Audrey Dewar. "If we got too much bigger, that wouldn't be possible and we would have to look at hiring people," she said.

